



**Testimony of Connecticut Fund for the Environment
Before the Public Health Committee**

In Support of H.B. No. 5900, AN ACT CONCERNING WATERSHED LANDS

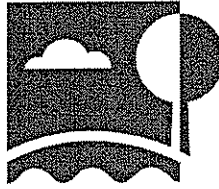
Submitted by Curtis P. Johnson, Senior Attorney
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Connecticut Fund for the Environment ("CFE"), with a total membership of approximately 6,000 Connecticut members, uses law and science to defend Connecticut's air, land and water.

Connecticut boasts some of the highest quality drinking water in the nation and Connecticut lawmakers play an important role in keeping our drinking water clean and pure. In order to safeguard our public water supply for the future, protective measures must be put into place today to protect the forests that purify and protect our drinking water and our health. Over two million Connecticut citizens depend on Connecticut reservoirs as their main source of drinking water. This is an important public health issue.

CFE strongly supports H.B. 5900, An Act Concerning Watershed Land, with certain amendments, described below. The goal of this bill is to prevent high density land development from occurring on public reservoir watershed lands, in order to protect the natural ability of the forests that surround and provide drainage to our reservoirs to continue their ability to naturally purify our public drinking water. This is an important public health objective.

Recently, developers have forced relatively high density developments in public drinking water watersheds. Such developments have been forced in Bethany, Ridgefield and Redding, to name just a few. Our State Plan of Conservation and Development has long identified the goal of maintaining low density development in drinking water watershed areas, at a density of no more than one residential home per two acres of developable land, in order to protect the quality of our raw drinking water supply. (See Growth Management Principle #5 of the Plan of C&D). The importance of maintaining low density development to protect raw reservoir water quality is highlighted by data collected by the South Central Regional Water Authority. Raw reservoir water is approximately four times as polluted in a relatively densely developed reservoir watershed area (Lake Whitney in Hamden) as compared to a relatively pristine reservoir watershed (Lake Gallaird in Guilford). Concerns are being raised daily about the capacity of filtration to remove potentially dangerous contaminants. Just yesterday, headlines described low levels of pharmaceutical chemicals found in treated water across the Country. Certainly, high density development threatens drinking water supplies with



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sewage contamination (the source of pharmaceutical chemicals) from failing septic systems. H.B. 5900 grants the Department of Health the power to review and either approve or reject development proposals in drinking water watershed lands.

CFE urges two amendments to the bill. First, we ask that the reference in Section referring to the review of applications for the "sale and development of water company lands" be eliminated. This bill should focus on land development projects in public water supply watersheds and not on water company land sales

CFE believes that this bill should require a clear and meaningful interim standard for review of development proposals prior to the adoption of development review regulations.. We believe it is likely that these regulations will take several years to be promulgated. In the interim, we strongly recommend that to prevent intense development on drinking water watershed land, the Department be directed to enforce the low density development standard recommended in our State Plan of Conservation and Development. An interim standard should be included in the bill directing the Department to only approve developments that will produce in aggregate an average of 800 gallons of sewage per day (the equivalent of a 4-bedroom household) per 2 acres of developable land . We believe the Department should be allowed to waive this interim standard for portions of the drinking water watershed that are already served by public sewer.

H.B. 5900 was drafted with the intention of protecting drinking water watershed lands from intense development, which will in turn protect our raw public drinking water supply that two million Connecticut residents depend on.